

Annual Conference on Horizontal priority Marginalized Roma Communities
(Concerning use of Structural funds for Roma inclusion in the Slovak Republic through implementation of Local Strategies of Complex Approach)

Information on: Marginalised Roma communities (MRC) - Horizontal priority

Excerpt from the

National Strategic Reference Framework 2007 – 2013 of the Slovak Republic

In the area of marginalised groups of the population, the specific issues of marginalized Roma communities are addressed separately. **The purpose of this horizontal priority is to strengthen cooperation and increase efficiency of coordination of activities and financial resources aimed at improving the living conditions of the members of marginalised Roma communities. Support to marginalized Roma communities is concentrated on four priority areas: education, employment, health care and housing, and three inter-related topics: poverty, discrimination and gender equality.**

Based on the conclusion of the CSF working group for the development of Roma Communities, whose task is to monitor the effects of interventions from the SF on the addressing of problems of MRC and to propose measures for increasing their efficiency, it is necessary to **increase the efficiency of interventions from the structural funds by applying a comprehensive approach that will combine several activities or projects into an overall development strategy of a particular location** so that the implementation of these measures is complementary with each other and so that it contributes to the long-term development of the marginalised Roma community in the location concerned. The application of this comprehensive approach places great emphasis on the interconnection of activities and active involvement of the local community in project implementation. The application of such comprehensive approach in addressing the problems of marginalised Roma communities is absolutely necessary, as it will help to solve the problems of marginalised Roma communities in a comprehensive way and will allow strategic **planning and management of the development and positive change of the community.**

Due to the extent and the challenging nature of such comprehensive approach, selected areas/micro-regions¹ interested in this complex approach will be provided assistance in the process of preparation of local strategies for the development of Roma communities and preparation of project activities within the strategy, with a view to ensure complementarity (both in terms of content and time) and maximum synergies. **The comprehensive approach will be applied particularly in areas with high concentration of marginalized Roma communities.**

Horizontal priority “marginalized Roma communities” is reflected in the individual strategic or specific priorities and their objectives, through the implementation of a broad spectrum of measures aimed at integrating marginalised Roma communities, particularly by improving the infrastructure of Roma settlements, employment, education, health care and social services.

¹ Implementation of projects will concentrate on micro-regions and settlements, which already have the necessary project documentation prepared under the PHARE grant scheme. 14 micro-regions (134 municipalities) were selected and received preliminary preparation under project TA 11400130021 „Building of administrative capacities of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government“

The comprehensive approach is targeted at settlements, which are listed in Sociographic Mapping from 2004, which declared their interest in addressing the issue of MRC by applying the comprehensive approach and which also prove their preparedness in line with the conditions to be specified in the calls for the submission of grant applications.

Based on the needs of the selected areas / micro-regions, assuming the implementation of comprehensive projects, an indicative allocation to the implementation of comprehensive projects at NSRF level of EUR 200 million was made, which will be financed through indicative allocations at the level of OPs relevant for the implementation of comprehensive projects (chapter 5.3.3). This indicative allocation may be adjusted during the programming period, based on the interim evaluation of the purposefulness and efficiency of the comprehensive approach selected. The proposed changes and the results of interim evaluation shall be discussed in the meetings of the National Monitoring Committee.

Implementation of projects under the comprehensive approach does not exclude the implementation of individual demand-driven projects, which will complement the comprehensive approach.

Coordination:

With horizontal priority 'marginalised Roma communities', NSRF intends to create the preconditions for efficient use of assistance from the structural funds for addressing the problems of MRC. Political responsibility for horizontal priority marginalised Roma communities is borne by the Deputy Prime Minister for Knowledge Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities. The coordinator of horizontal priority MRC is the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities (OPSG RC), which will establish a department for the coordination of HP MRC ² in order to carry out activities related to administrative arrangements and methodological guidance for horizontal priority MRC.

The ambition is to use the structural funds for extending, complementing and better coordinating the already-existing national level programmes. Based on several years of experience with the implementation of Government policy for the integration of economically and socially excluded Roma communities and by using the proven inclusion tools, the period from 2007 to 2013 can be used to produce synergic and sustainability effects. The pillars for these activities include: government policy based on compensation measures, departmental education concepts (preparation of children in pre-school age, use of teacher's assistants, support to Roma language, integrated education), regional development and housing policies (building of rental housing and infrastructure), support to health (medical assistants), community development and employment (community social advisors, community centres, social enterprises) and other. As a strong point, there exists a well-developed institutional network comprising state institutions (regional offices of OPSG RC, departments of higher territorial units, regional offices of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, etc.) and the non-governmental and civil sector. This network represents qualified human potential. In order to find a comprehensive solution and achieve better coordination, particularly at regional level, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma

² In line with the document entitled "Analysis of Administrative Capacities for the Programming Period of 2007 -2013" approved by Government Resolution No 396 of 2 May 2007

Communities ordered the preparation of Regional Concepts for the Development of Roma Communities in areas with high concentration of marginalised groups (the regions of Košice, Prešov and Banská Bystrica). These concepts were prepared with the involvement of broad partnerships and they were also discussed and approved at the level of higher territorial units.

The proposed measures for achieving the desired impacts and coordination include:

- comprehensive approach to the problems of MRC, which is applied in the following OPs: Regional OP, OP Employment and Social Inclusion, OP Education, OP Environment, OP Competitiveness and Economic Growth and OP Health);
- individual (demand-driven) projects, which can be implemented under all OPs;

The tasks of the OPSG RC and its cooperation with the managing authorities, the scope and the exact conditions of implementation of the above tools in the individual operational programmes will be stipulated by a binding cooperation agreement between OPSG RC and each MA or IB/MA.

the comprehensive approach encompasses the following:

- submission of local comprehensive approach strategies (CA) by the municipality or micro-region (further elaborating the regional policies of social and economic inclusion of MRC, whose preparation was initiated by OPSG RC in 2006 for the regions of Prešov, Košice and Banská Bystrica and which require the involvement of broad partnerships in the regions);
- evaluation and approval of local comprehensive approach strategies;
- preparation of projects in line with the approved local strategies of comprehensive approach application;
- approval and implementation of projects under OP;
- progress monitoring and evaluation of the contribution of individual projects to the attainment of local strategies' objectives;
- evaluation of the contribution of complex projects to the attainment of the objective of the horizontal priority.

The powers of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities relating to the implementation of the complex approach are stipulated by the authorisation letter of the Deputy Prime Minister for Knowledge Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities, who is regularly informed by OPSG RC about the coordination of HP MRC.

- OPSG RC enters into cooperation and coordination agreements with the individual MAs and IB/MAs relating to the attainment of HP MRC. These agreements are signed by the Head of the Government Office as the statutory representative of the Government Office;
- It cooperates with the managing authorities in the process of preparation of calls for projects submission, applying the comprehensive approach;
- it publishes calls for submission of local comprehensive approach strategies;
- it sets up a selection committee for the comprehensive approach and coordinates its activity, with the aim of approving local strategies;
- it cooperates with the municipalities/micro regions, which can obtain advisory based on successful local CA strategy;
- it cooperates with MA and IB/MA in the selection, evaluation and monitoring of projects submitted under the comprehensive approach. These projects will be clearly identified directly in the grant application;

- it coordinates the work of the monitoring group for comprehensive approach application, whose task is to monitor the implementation of projects on the spot and address the identified problems in implementation (if any), directly communicating and cooperating with the managing authorities of the relevant operational programmes;
- it cooperates with the Working Group for Marginalised Roma Communities in monitoring and evaluating impacts on MRC produced by the structural funds in the period of 2007 – 2013;
- it ensures special monitoring and evaluation focused on overall fulfilment of the approved local CA strategies.

Competencies of managing authorities and intermediate bodies related to comprehensive approach implementation

Managing authorities and intermediate bodies involved in comprehensive approach implementation:

- are members of cross-departmental commission for the evaluation and selection of CA projects;
- make an indicative allocation to the implementation of complex projects under OP;
- announce calls for projects submission under the comprehensive approach. A system of standing call is used, i.e. it is possible to submit projects at any time during OP implementation. This will create the preconditions for smooth implementation of all components of the complex project respecting the time schedule of implementation of the approved local CA strategy;
- evaluate and select individual projects submitted under CA;
- ensure monitoring and control of successful projects submitted under CA;
- cooperate with OPSG RC in preparing the calls for projects submission covered by CA and in making the necessary technical arrangements;
- provide, in regular intervals, all information and data needed by OPSG RC to perform monitoring and evaluation of impacts of implementation of the Funds on MRC.

Projects having an impact on HP MRC will be implemented as follows:

- the applicant will, in a separate section of the grant application, clearly indicate that the project is focused on MRC;
- the actual impact of projects on HP MRC, as indicated by the applicant, will be assessed by OPSG RC in the process of evaluation of projects focusing on MRC;
- projects identified by OPSG RC as having significant impacts on MRC will receive extra points (except for those operational programmes, which cover HP MRC by a specific measure or group of activities);
- OPSG RC monitors projects focusing on MRC on a sample defined by MA or IB/MA.

Information and publicity measures, as an important component for creating the atmosphere of cooperation and for communicating successful solutions improving the situation of marginalised Roma communities, will be covered by OPSG RC with the following activities:

- it will, in regular intervals and in cooperation with MA and IB/MA, inform the Central Coordinating Authority and the Deputy Prime Minister for Knowledge Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities on the progress of implementation of HP MRC;

- it shall arrange for the implementation of the communication plan for HP MRC with the aim of raising the awareness among the members of MRC and the broad public of the possibilities for obtaining assistance and of the results of implementation of HP MRC.

With the aim of involving beneficiaries and other stakeholders, creating a broader platform for communication on HP MRC and better monitoring of impacts of the implemented projects on marginalised Roma Communities, the CSF working group for the development of Roma communities (official name Working Committee for the Development of Roma Communities) will continue its work in close cooperation with the department for the coordination of HP MRC of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities. The activities of this working group proved to be a good example of SF implementation in the 2004-2006 programming period.

Current situation summary:

- Call for proposals published on 16.09.2009
- Number of registered applications received is 251